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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 005982

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SUBJECT: PRT/ASADABAD: TALIBAN INTENSIFIES EFFORTS TO
INTIMIDATE CIVILIANS

REF: KABUL 5959

Classified By: A/PolCouns Martin Murphy for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) The murder of two female teachers on December 9, along with three of their family members, was the first direct attack on education in Kunar in recent memory. This, and an increasing number of night letters in Kunar,s main towns, has created an increased climate of fear in the province. Government reaction has so far been more noise than substance. The PRT plans to provide assistance to strengthen the educational establishment in Kunar. END SUMMARY

12. (C) On December 9, four women and one man, all members of the same family, were killed in their house in Narang District. Two adults and a child at the house survived the attack. The attack was coordinated with an attack on the police station, only 300 meters away, apparently intended to keep the police busy while the house was assaulted. Two of the victims were teachers at the local girls' school and had been observers in last year,s elections. The two other women killed were their mothers, and the man killed was the brother of one of the female victims. While there have been threats against teachers in the past, this is the first attack on them carried out in Kunar that the PRT knows of. PRT is planning to increase its support to schools in the province.

Singled Out

13. (C) Reportedly the victims had few relations in the village, and so had few protectors. Only sixteen people attended their funeral (including the Governor). According to their cousin, the victims also stood out in the community

for having served as monitors in last year,s parliamentary elections and for participating in a work training program about seven months ago in which they acquired sewing machines from the PRT. Sometime recently, the family sold a piece of land and bought a Toyota Corolla with the money from the sale, using this to commute to adult literacy classes they taught in Asadabad. Their cousin said that the girls' school in Ghondo, where the victims taught, was seen as the nexus of foreign influence there. According to him, rumors had circulated in the village for some time before the attack, alleging the victims had converted to Christianity in return for money and gifts from the PRT. The cousin suggested that when the insurgents planned the attack, his relatives were pointed out by their neighbors as an apt target.

14. (C) The cousin also told the PRT that he and the survivors (his cousin and his cousin,s wife), who are now living with him in Asadabad, had come under attack at his house within the past few days. He had denounced the Taliban in a television interview shortly after the murders and believes that he is now a marked man.

Intimidation Campaign

15. (C) Night letters had appeared in the village not long before the attack, threatening teachers with death if they continued to teach, or warning people generally not to have anything to do with ISAF or the GOA. Other similar night letters have appeared around Kunar over the past few months, without apparent effect on the activities of school teachers. Such night letters have become more common in the past

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month, notably in the lower southern Kunar Valley, where Narang, Sarkany, Chowkay, Khas Kunar, and Nurgal districts lie. These have been the most secure areas of Kunar. PRT believes the reappearance of enemy activity in these areas is due to winter weather, which has forced militants out of the mountains. They are focusing their attention on the lower and more populated valleys of Kunar, where they have begun a campaign of intimidation against schools and other &soft targets.8

16. (C) After this attack, the other approximately twenty female teachers in Narang District reportedly fled to Jalalabad or Kabul (male teachers have not fled Narang, according to contacts from the district). Elders from neighboring Chowkay District denied that the attack had an effect on schools in their area, but the Director of Education for Kunar and others have said that fear is widespread among teachers and students and that participation in adult literacy programs had dropped.

Government and PRT Response

17. (C) The Governor of Kunar responded to the murders by promptly transferring the Narang District Administrator and Police Chief, replacing the Administrator with a former history teacher whom the Governor described as a "tough guy".

The Governor,s personal security detail went to Narang and arrested seven men suspected of involvement in the murders; but they were released a few days later for lack of evidence.

The victims, cousin commented that the arrests were a PR exercise, saying the Governor,s men had simply gone out and detained "the usual suspects". At a USAID-funded school opening on December 16 in Khas Kunar, the Governor denounced the killings in Narang and has since made radio appeals for protection of teachers and for information to solve the recent murders. The Education Ministry gave the family of the victims Af250,000 as economic support.

18. (C) The PRT has met with the Director of Education for the

province and discussed strengthening the education system in Kunar in ways that will not increase the danger to teachers and their families. This will certainly include building more schools, improving existing schools so that they can provide education to girls, and may include funding academic competitions and other support that would have a strictly Afghan face.⁸

19. (C) COMMENT: Night letters in Kunar, s main towns in the southern part of the province, which has been considered the safer part of Kunar, have increased general fear of the enemy. The killing of five people who were teachers and family members, coming after a long string of murders of civilians employed by the ANA/ISAF Korengal Outpost (reftel), has sent a clear signal that the enemy intends to carry through on the threats contained in the night letters and will continue targeting innocents in Kunar in an effort to demoralize the general populace and dissuade them from cooperating with the GOA and ISAF. This intimidation campaign highlights the increasingly important role that police forces must play in Kunar security during the winter months and beyond.

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